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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/ERA (GIAUQUE)

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SUBJECT: UK EXPECTATIONS FOR JUNE GAERC

REF: 06/04/09 GIAUQUE-MILLS E-MAIL

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Greg Berry for reasons 1.4  
(B) and (D).

1.(C) The UK agrees with U.S. views on the June 15 GAERC agenda items (ref) "pretty much across the board," and in particular welcomed the U.S. message on the need for continued EU follow up after the EU-Pakistan Summit, according to Paul Williams, the Foreign Office's EU Correspondent. The UK expects discussion and review of the draft conclusions for the June 18-19 European Council to consume much of the GAERC meeting, especially on the institutional issues aimed at helping produce a "yes" vote in an Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. Williams provided a snapshot to Polcouns on June 12 of the UK's expectations for the June GAERC, and identified Burma and the MEPP as the two issues of most interest to the UK.

12. (C) Burma: The UK had originally intended to push for GAERC consensus on a strong statement and EU action in response to the outcome of the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK), but as it now appeared the trial would not be concluded by the GAERC meeting, the UK was not now pressing for a lengthy statement and agreement on actions. The UK has placed the Burma situation on the agenda, however, and intends to use the discussion to focus on what steps the EU can take assuming ASSK is found guilty of an offense and subject to further punishment. Williams said that the UK was trying at the June GAERC to "smoke out" which EU Members were not prepared for significant EU sanctions on Burma and start the process of "walking them through" the need for a strong response.

13. (C) MEPP: Williams welcomed the U.S. message on MEPP, calling it "helpful" and a message that the UK supports. According to Williams, there will be a formal GAERC conclusion issued on the MEPP and one issued on Lebanon; the MEPP conclusion will specifically refer to the necessity for a two-state solution to achieve lasting peace, in order to "send a message to Tel Aviv." Williams noted that the GAERC discussion will come just hours after PM Netanyahu's address that same day on the topic and because Ministers will not have fully absorbed Netanyahu's remarks, this may limit how much in-depth discussion takes place. When asked, Williams said there would be no specific reference to the Quartet or the Quartet Principles in the EU conclusion, though the substance of the principles are contained in the draft language, because several EU Members had objected to a specific reference to the Quartet Principles. Williams said, although there "are dissenting voices," it remained "for now" UK and EU policy to view the Quartet as the pre-eminent mechanism for coordinating international diplomatic efforts and for the Quartet Principles to serve as the basis for any international recognition of a new Palestinian Government.

14. (C) Syria/Lebanon: According to Williams, there is no plan to take action on the EU-Syria Association Agreement at this GAERC because EU Members agreed it would be useful to wait and see how Damascus responds to the new Lebanese Government. Williams said the UK welcomed the Lebanese election results, and the EU as a whole shared that view, which would be reflected in the GAERC conclusion.

15. (C) Western Balkans: This will be the subject of the Ministers' lunch and the UK expects the discussion to focus on Slovenia/Croatia and Serbia. Williams said that Enlargement Commissioner Rehn will brief the Ministers on the Slovenia/Croatia border dispute, which the UK welcomes as a way "to get the issue more attention," as London is concerned at the lack of progress and believes greater international pressure on both sides is needed.

16. (SBU) Guantanamo: The Ministers will adopt without discussion the EU-U.S. Joint Statement on Guantanamo, which the UK supports. Williams said some Members wanted to continue a discussion of issues related to detainee resettlement at this GAERC meeting, but the Czech Presidency did not want further debate at this meeting.

17. (C) Cuba: Ministers will evaluate the results of the EU's political dialogue with Havana over the past year and adopt the text of the Common Position on Cuba, which has been agreed upon already, according to Williams. The main debate over the Common Position had been how to assess Cuban progress on human rights benchmarks. The UK was pleased that the key benchmarks remain -- release of all political prisoners, access to Cuban prisons for NGOs, and Cuban implementation of human rights conventions that Cuba has signed. Williams described the EU debate on Cuba as ranging from the "skepticism of Denmark and us" that there had been any real progress over the past year, to Spain's "optimistic" contention that there has "been measurable progress in the right direction."

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